

## Consider a diversity of funding and revenue sources and make selections based on local opportunities when planning for long-term program sustainability

In order to craft a sustainable financial model, organizations need to identify long-term sustainable revenue sources. As with the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program, grant funding can be a great way to get an effort off the ground; however, grant funding does run out, leaving the need to secure alternate revenue sources. Many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners overcame this challenge by aligning revenue opportunities with gaps or untapped potential for business in their local market. In some cases, several years were needed to gain trust and demonstrate results before funding was secured, so the sooner you begin considering options, the better the chances are of finding and securing one that is viable. Consider a wide range of options and pursue those opportunities that best match what your organization and local market have to offer. See a detailed list of potential funding sources in the [Market Position - Develop a Business Model handbook](#) [1].

- In 2010, St. Lucie County in Florida was awarded an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant and created the [Solar and Energy Loan Fund](#) [2] (SELF), expecting that property assessed clean energy loans (PACE) would be an integral part of the residential loan structure. When Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae challenged the residential PACE system nationwide, SELF shifted direction. They evolved through a multi-year process into a certified community development financial institution (CDFI) focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades for the residential sector. They targeted low and moderate income populations that had been especially affected in Florida by the economic crisis in 2009.
- The change meant that SELF no longer had access to capital from investors seeking highly secured and profitable investments through PACE; however, becoming a CDFI allowed SELF to diversify its products and receive new types of support in the form of grants for technical assistance and loan capital. By becoming a certified CDFI, SELF was able to attract capital from banks as Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) investments and establish legitimacy in the eyes of other socially responsible investors. For example, in the last year of operating under the Better Buildings grant, SELF contacted faith-based foundations that seek to make socially responsible community investments. Over the year and a half after the Better Buildings grant, SELF raised an additional \$835,000 from 5 different religious organizations.
- Under their business model, SELF faced some challenges limiting their ability to attract capital. For example, even though they implemented new policies to have Uniform Commercial Codes and a more strict collections process, capital providers are still wary of the fact they provide "unsecured" loans. Nevertheless, SELF's portfolio results of less than 1% default and less than 3% delinquency helped prove that they had a good evaluation method and their risk management procedures were effective. The new CDFI business model allowed SELF to become self-sufficient by providing a platform to offer financial and non-financial services that could generate diversified revenue streams. These revenue sources include interest and fees earned on their investments; fees from off balance sheet portfolios such as commercial PACE; and fees from partnering with other financial institutions to sell their financial product and other activities such as contractor training.

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### Links

- [1] <https://rpsc.energy.gov/handbooks/market-position-business-model-%E2%80%93-develop-business-model>  
[2] <http://cleanenergyloanprogram.org/>